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**PeaceHealth, UO partner on national mental health initiative**

EUGENE, Ore. – PeaceHealth Behavioral Health Services will soon be partnering with researchers at the University of Oregon to help develop targeted treatments for high-risk adolescents and young adults with schizophrenia.

Part of an ambitious $52 million grant from the National Institutes of Health led by the Yale University Department of Psychiatry, the UO-PeaceHealth collaboration is one of 27 teams across the country and the only one from the Northwest in the new consortium, the Psychosis Risk Outcomes Network, or ProNET.

PeaceHealth’s primary role in the research will be identifying and recruiting patients and administering psychological, cognitive and medical assessments. The UO will try to understand how the brain changes for at-risk adolescents to better develop diagnostic and treatment strategies using magnetic resonance imaging at the UO’s Lewis Center for NeuroImaging and an electroencephalogram in the UO’s Department of Human Physiology.

“PeaceHealth is thrilled to be a part of the groundbreaking research of the ProNET study,” said Carla Gerber, behavioral health services manager and agency site principal investigator for the study. “The goal of identifying new treatments that target patients’ individual problem areas is especially exciting.”

The patients involved in the study will receive both MRI and EEG scans. The MRI provides localized images of the parts of the brain that are active and the EEG offers information about rapid changes in brain activity.

“Being able to be a part of a consortium this large to harmonize measures and collaborate with researchers around the world represents a unique opportunity to study this at a scale that has not been done before,” said the UO's Fred Sabb, the principal investigator for the Oregon site and a research associate professor in the Prevention Science Institute as well as assistant vice president for research facilities. “Our hope is that this study could lead to more directed, more personalized treatment of schizophrenia.”

The UO’s partnership with PeaceHealth will allow the university to take schizophrenia research to a new level, Sabb said. By connecting university researchers with PeaceHealth’s front-line medical personnel, investigators will better understand the diagnosis and the causes of the disease with an eye toward improving treatment.

The collaboration builds on the respective strengths of the two entities. PeaceHealth has been a regional leader in early diagnosis and treatment for schizophrenia. Since 2010, the Behavioral Health Services team has been involved in multiple clinical research trials aimed at better understanding, detecting and treating the disease, including:

* PeaceHealth was a treatment site for RAISE, or Recovery After Initial Schizophrenia Episode, which provided coordinated specialty care within community mental health settings. The study was able to significantly cut the time between positive research outcomes and large-scale implementation, paving the way for federal funding for first-episode psychosis treatment across the country.
* In 2018, PeaceHealth was awarded a four-year federal grant through the Oregon Health Authority to establish a treatment program for young people with the goal of providing interventions that help prevent the onset of schizophrenia or minimize its negative impact on the lives of young people and their families.

The UO’s Lewis Center for Neuroimaging supports a range of interdisciplinary, multifaceted research in neuroscience and biological imaging. The recent acquisition of a Siemens Prisma scanner, the industry-standard tool for top-tier research institutions involved in brain imaging, has paved the way for the UO to engage in more studies involving MRI technology and more large-scale, multi-institution projects like the NIH-funded ProNET study.

According to the NIH, schizophrenia is one of the 15 leading causes of disability worldwide. It is characterized by alterations to a person’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors, which can include a loss of contact with reality known as psychosis. These symptoms typically emerge in adolescence or early adulthood and, if untreated, can be persistent and disabling.

**About PeaceHealth:** PeaceHealth, based in Vancouver, Wash., is a not-for-profit Catholic health system offering care to communities in Washington, Oregon and Alaska. PeaceHealth has approximately 16,000 caregivers, a group practice with more than 900 providers and 10 medical centers serving both urban and rural communities throughout the Northwest. In 1890, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace founded what has become PeaceHealth. The Sisters shared expertise and transferred wisdom from one medical center to another, always finding the best way to serve the unmet need for healthcare in their communities. Today, PeaceHealth is the legacy of the founding Sisters and continues with a spirit of respect, stewardship, collaboration and social justice in fulfilling its Mission. Visit us online at [peacehealth.org](http://www.peacehealth.org).

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